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Freud on Moses and Monotheism

In the last lecture which I had the honor to give at Hillel House, which was some years ago, I had to plead that a hearing be given to a philosophy which is wholly alien to me, but by which I could not help being impressed.¹ My task tonight is entirely different. It is our duty as scholars and perhaps our duty as human beings to combine open-mindedness with intransigence. We must be able to resist temptations; for example, the temptation to accept the imaginative and alluring as true. No intransigence is required for rejecting the absurd, and yet it is not possible always to ignore the absurd. A great scholar of the past said, "I despise almost nothing," which means, among other things, we can learn something by examining the absurd, be it only this: that we are again overwhelmed by the transcendent beauty of the principle of contradiction.

The plan to give the present lecture arose last year over the Passover table where one of my younger friends told me of a lecture given on the same subject by a colleague of mine, a very noted educator. Having read again the Passover Haggada and being again made familiar with the great events in Egypt so many thousand years ago, I was somewhat shocked by the presentation given in Freud's book or by my colleague.² And so I said I must give another lecture on the same subject presenting the other side of the picture. Of course, I had not heard that lecture, and I do not remember now what I was told by this young friend at the time, but I said then that I would present the other side of the coin making the assumption, which may be numismatically intolerable, that there may be coins where both sides look exactly alike. You see, this was because what I had heard that evening over the dinner table of Freud's understanding of Moses reminded me of something on which I was working at that time, namely, Machiavelli's views of Moses in particular and of the Bible in general.³ Yet, when I began to read Freud's writing, which is only a short while ago, I saw immediately that I could not possibly deal with the subject which I had quasi-

promised. So I shall limit myself in my exposition tonight to a discussion of Freud's thesis. If anyone is interested in the question regarding Machiavelli, we can perhaps take this up in the discussion.⁴

From the outset I knew that I would not deal with two subjects necessarily connected with the subject of tonight. The first is psychoanalysis, and the second is Freud the Jew. Regarding the second subject, I am so fortunate as to be able to tell you that there appeared an article on this subject—"Sigmund Freud, the Jew"—by Ernst Simon of the Hebrew University in the Yearbook 2 of the Leo Baeck Institute of Jews from Germany (1957).⁵ Ernst Simon has read, it seems, everything which Freud wrote, and in addition the numerous writings which deal with Freud's life and character. Freud, it appears, regarded himself as a good Jew. What he meant by this can be stated as follows. The nonreligious Jews of our time may be divided into two classes. There are those who wish that they had not been born Jews, who regard their Jewish origin as a misfortune; and there are those who do not wish not to be born as Jews or are even perhaps glad to be born as Jews. They feel that the best in them is due to their Jewish origin, or at any rate inextricably linked with that. In a strange way they still believe somehow that the Jews are the chosen people. In continental Europe they revealed themselves frequently by the fact that they regarded themselves as Jews and not as Germans, Austrians, and so on. Freud was certainly a good Jew in this sense. I go a step further. I believe that Jews of type number two are both better and happier men than Jews of type number one, and I think that this preference can be defended on rational and not merely Jewish grounds. There is a proverb of old: "Adorn the Sparta which was given to you at birth." One must not run away from one's place, from one's fate, but accept it, and even love it and praise it. Surely people, and in particular Jews, may be so unfortunately born that no one can blame them if they run away from the locus of their birth. But this cannot reasonably be said of Jews as Jews, of a group of men which, humanly speaking, still exists because of the unequalled heroic dedication and decision made by our ancestors three thousand years ago and repeated innumerable times since. Sacrifices of the highest order had to be brought by every generation of Jews, not the least of them being the bearing of indescribable indignities. But we held our heads high since we knew in our bones that only he is contemptible who depends in his self-respect on the respect of others. I am not quite certain whether Freud was a good Jew in this sense. The reason why I am not certain is this—that he was somewhat too concerned with what he called "anti-Semitism." This overconcern arose not only in Freud but in quite a few other Jews of his generation, and perhaps even of younger generations,

from the expectation of a truly or unqualifiedly liberal society in which the rights of man as man would be recognized not only legally but by every noncriminal member of society in private life. This expectation presupposed that practically all men can be habitually rational in their conduct. Freud questioned this presupposition, but he did not draw the necessary consequences from this questioning. He remained vulnerable to "anti-Semitism."

I deem it appropriate to read to you a few passages from Ernst Simon's analysis. After having quoted a couple of passages from this work, *Moses and Monotheism*, he says:

These words are penetrated by deep pathos, the pathos of a Jew who is proud of the life-force of his ancient people. This is the first positive position taken in the book: it is a direct continuation of Freud's Jewish nationalism, which previously had taken on a vague and ambivalent form and now attained clearer and less hesitant expression. The second positive note is struck when Freud speaks of the pathos of Jewish suffering. . . . How strong is the Jewish pride of the aged Freud! On the basis of his opinions we would expect him to add that the entire outlook of the people of Israel, despite its stubborn clinging to its religion, is founded on a fundamental misconception—the holiness of an 'illusion' without any 'future.' Freud would not have denied the truth of his argument during any rational debate, but here it does not influence his choice of words and his style and, indeed, seems to have been forgotten at the time he wrote these and some similar passages. . . . Freud speaks here like a great Jewish *spiritual patriot*, and the positive effect upon him is so great that he uses arguments which cancel one another out. We may presume that he realized these discrepancies, but did not attach decisive importance to them and thought that they could be resolved by a higher stage of synthesis. But there is another contradiction which almost annihilates the main theory of his book. At the beginning of the second essay Freud claims that Jewish monotheism was borrowed from Egypt. But later, in the third essay, he states that the teacher of Moses, King Ikhnaton, 'followed perhaps intimations which through his mother or by other ways had reached him from the Near or the Far East.' Thus 'the idea of monotheism must (!) have returned in the fashion of a boomerang (!) into the country of its origin.' (Note the logical jump from 'perhaps the Near or the Far East' to a cogent conclusion as to Palestine as the homeland of monotheism!)⁶

Simon tries to give a kind of psychoanalytical interpretation into which I cannot go because I am not competent.

Instead I prefer to suggest another definition of the good Jew, that is, the nonreligious good Jew. He is a man who knows that he is a Jew,

that he belongs to the Jewish people, and that the root of his problem is the fact that he cannot believe what his ancestors believed. This leads to a dedicated concern with the truth of the Jewish tradition. I believe one can say that Freud was a good Jew without qualifications in this sense. The question is whether he was a good thinker on this august theme.

After reading the book I found it indispensable not to give a lecture proper but a kind of commentary on various passages. I begin, naturally, at the beginning. The opening words are "To deny." Freud immediately makes clear, I do not know whether with full intention, that what he is doing is something negative, something destructive, something subversive, a reprobation of something. In Jewish literature we have an interesting parallel to that, although Freud was probably unaware of it. In one of the greatest Jewish works of the Middle Ages, Yehuda Halevi's *Kuzari*, a pagan king is converted to Judaism by a conversation with a rabbi, after having had conversations, first, with a philosopher, then with a Christian, and finally with a Muslim. The philosopher is the only individual among these four men who begins his speech with a negation.⁷ The use of the term philosopher at this time meant automatically not a Jew.

The first sentence is: "To deny a people the man whom it praises as the greatest of its sons is not a deed to be undertaken lightly—especially by one belonging to that people."⁸ The denial of Freud is directed against himself, a self-denial, a moral action, an action requiring self-sacrifice. "No consideration, however, will move me to set aside truth in favor of supposed national interests. Moreover, the elucidation of the mere facts of the problem may be expected to deepen our insight into the situation with which they are concerned." The act of Freud is an act of self-denial, but also an act which looks like an act of treason against the national interest. The justification is that it is done for the sake of truth. The question arises, is truth a part of the national interest? Does the true national interest necessarily lead to truth? Does this apply to the Jewish people in particular or to all peoples? At any rate Freud seems to make a suggestion of the utmost importance—that truth is more important than society. Truth means knowing the truth as distinguished, in the first place, from proclaiming the truth. Freud, however, tacitly identifies knowing the truth and proclaiming the truth. This is justifiable only if the truth is essentially salutary. This would be the case if knowledge of the truth and only knowledge of the truth makes us good men and good citizens. But if truth is essentially edifying, as I believe it is, one should not begin with "To deny." Moreover, if this is so, knowledge of the truth, quest for truth, and communication of the truth,

would be *the* key to the understanding of man, to the analysis of man, to the analysis of the soul, to psychoanalysis. Let us see how Freud's argument proceeds.

It is generally held that the name of Moses is Egyptian.

It might have been expected that one of the many authors who recognized Moses to be an Egyptian name would have drawn the conclusion, or at least considered the possibility, that the bearer of an Egyptian name was himself an Egyptian. [pp. 5–6]

I do not comment on this passage, because I know a bit, as you all do, about Jewish names. Freud suggests the conclusion that Moses was an Egyptian. It is not hard to understand why men have failed to draw this conclusion. Freud explains this failure.

... we have no word of him [Moses—L.S.] except from the Holy Books and the written traditions of the Jews. Although the decision lacks final historical certainty, the great majority of historians have expressed the opinion that Moses did live and that the exodus from Egypt, led by him, did in fact take place. It has been maintained with good reason that the later history of Israel could not be understood if this were not admitted. Science today has become much more cautious and deals much more leniently with tradition than it did in the early days of historical investigation. [pp. 3–4]

Freud refers to the early history of biblical criticism; the then prevailing unqualified distrust of tradition is now recognized as unsound. This explains why one does not draw the conclusion that the Egyptian name of Moses bespeaks Egyptian origin. The conclusion that Moses was an Egyptian is reached not from his name but from psychoanalysis as the starting point. Therefore, Freud says: "The consideration thus reached will impress only that minority of readers familiar with analytical reasoning and able to appreciate its conclusions. To them I hope it will appear of significance."⁹

This, of course, raises a great question as to the relationship of psychoanalysis to scientific caution regarding tradition. The story of Moses' miraculous salvation by the daughter of Pharaoh reminds us of similar stories told of Cyrus, Romulus, Hiero of Syracuse, Oedipus, and so on. Of this kind of story, which is regarded here as a typical myth, there exists a psychoanalytical interpretation.

A hero is a man who stands up manfully against his father and in the end victoriously overcomes him. The myth in question traces this

struggle back to the very dawn of the hero's life, by having him born against his father's will and saved in spite of his father's evil intentions. [p. 9]

The intention shows itself in the exposure. But the story of Moses differs in striking respects. He was not exposed by an evil father as Cyrus, for example, was exposed. In the other stories the hero is of noble descent and exposed by these noble parents, but saved and brought up by humble parents. Moses, however, stems from humble parents, is hidden out of fear of a tyrannical and alien ruler, discovered by the ruler's daughter, and brought up by the royal family. Why this change? Some scholars, who are partly inclined to go along with Freud in his interpretation of stories, say that the original version was that Moses was a child of Pharaoh's daughter; Jews saved him and brought him up as their own. Freud rejects this on the following ground: the Egyptians had no reason to make this myth, for to them Moses was not a hero. Nor did the Jews have any reason to make their hero into an alien. Therefore, this view must be discussed. "The Moses myth as we know it today lags sadly behind its secret motives. If Moses is not of royal lineage our legend cannot make him into a hero; if he remains a Jew it has done nothing to raise his status."¹⁰ The purpose of the story, then, must be to raise Moses' status, to make him into a hero, to glorify him. How does Freud know? In trying to understand a story occurring in a book, be it the story of Moses' birth or any other story, it is always wise to consider the context, the immediate context as well as the larger context. That means to consider the book as a whole. What does the Bible say regarding glorification? A man should not glory in being wise and courageous and so on, but should glory in the fact that he fears God." This is the biblical notion of glorification. It says of Moses: "the man Moses was very humble." The great legislator was taught the great science of administration by an alien, and this is not conducive to his glorification. He has to learn the art of administration from a foreigner. The Bible does not wish to glorify Moses, but God. The story of Moses' exposure and salvation shows the extreme improbability of the survival of the baby Moses, the extreme improbability of the emergence of the Jewish people, because that was bound up with the salvation of Moses. This is in perfect accord with the story in Genesis, the story of the binding of Isaac, where all probabilities are against a son being born to Abraham, and after he was born and Abraham had been promised a great future for his race through his only son, he was commanded to slaughter this son. And Abraham, in spite of the seeming absurdity of that command, is willing to obey it. The extreme improbability of the survival of a people without arms

and without a land, a people which has no visible means of support—only God; if that is not one expression of the broad message of the Bible which every child can see, I do not know what it is. And if this is sufficient for understanding a particular biblical story, it is prudent to leave it at that. Freud has no understanding of this peculiar quality ascribed to Moses, which is called in English humility, and at the same time he is concerned with humiliating man.

Freud explains the peculiarity of the story of Moses by having recourse to a feature which is common to all similar stories. In all such stories, to the extent to which they contain a historical core, the family which brings up the allegedly exposed baby is the real family. The family which is said to have exposed the baby is fictitious. A humble shepherd and his wife bring up a baby and he proves to be an extremely able man and he becomes the ruler. What will he do as a sensible, that is, politically sensible, man? He will say that the shepherd and his wife are not his parents, that they only brought him up. If we accept this canon for interpreting stories of this kind, it would mean that Moses was an Egyptian brought up by Jews.

The divergence of the Moses legend from all others of its kind might be traced back to a special feature in the story of Moses' life. Whereas in all other cases the hero rises above his humble beginnings as his life progresses, the heroic life of the man Moses began by descending from his eminence to the level of the children of Israel. [p. 13]

In other words, whereas Cyrus was really the son of poor shepherds and then became the founder of the Persian empire and claimed to have been the exposed child of some royal family, the case of Moses is just the opposite: Moses stemmed from a royal family and was adopted by humble parents. Freud makes it clear that this is entirely hypothetical. In fact one could say, to be a bit more exact, that there is no shred of evidence for his contention. Yet he says, "The interpretation of the exposure myth attaching to Moses *necessitated* the conclusion [i.e., not only 'led to' but 'necessitated'—L.S.] that he was an Egyptian whom a people needed to make into a Jew."¹²

It is never sufficient to show that a certain theory is entirely baseless, because as a theory it intends to explain a difficulty. Here is the difficulty. Why had Moses to be presented as brought up in all the wisdom of the Egyptians? As you see, I make now the tentative assumption that the biblical stories are not necessarily literally true. The man who had to liberate the Jews from Egyptian rule had to be competent to deal with the Egyptians and with Pharaoh himself on their own level, in a way

intelligible to the Egyptians. To establish the superiority of Moses' craft or skill to that of the Egyptians, the Bible gives a comparison of Moses' miracles and the Egyptian sorcerers' miracles or marvels. It makes sense to say that humanly speaking, politically speaking, a man who wants to liberate a nation from the imperial nation which oppresses it has to know very well the imperial nation. We have some contemporary examples of people who have studied at Oxford and Cambridge and then affected some changes in a dependency of the British empire.

We have now "established" the fact that Moses was an Egyptian. But if Moses was an Egyptian, two great difficulties arise: (1) if Moses was an Egyptian, his religion was the Egyptian religion, but the Egyptians were polytheists and idolators, and Moses is known to be the founder of the monotheistic religion most strongly opposed to polytheism and idolatry; (2) what could possibly have induced an Egyptian prince to make himself the leader of "culturally inferior immigrants"?¹³ As for the first question, Freud has a simple answer. Shortly before Moses' time (there are certain chronological difficulties which Freud did not straighten out and which I cannot straighten out) there was a great change in the Egyptian religion—what Freud calls the great heresy of Ikhnaton. He was an Egyptian king who founded a strictly monotheistic religion: there is only one universal god, the sun god Aton. This god manifests himself in the sun and is not himself the sun. Furthermore, Ikhnaton's heresy was characterized by great intolerance to polytheism and idolatry. Conclusion—there was a monotheistic Egyptian religion which fits the requirements of Moses and his religion. As to the second question, what could have induced an Egyptian prince to step down and mingle with these "culturally inferior immigrants," the following answer is offered. The religion of Ikhnaton was wiped out very shortly after its emergence by reactionary polytheistic priests. Moses was an adherent of the heretical and persecuted Aton worship, and the only hope for his religion consisted in finding a new people which would dedicate itself to the cult of Aton.

The argument is based on a mere assumption—on the assumption that Moses was an Egyptian. Freud gives another confirmation, as he calls it, of this thesis.

... Moses was said to have been "slow of speech"—that is to say, he must have had a speech impediment or inhibition—so that he had to call on Aaron (who is called his brother) for assistance in his supposed discussions with Pharaoh. This again may be historical truth and would serve as a welcome addition to the endeavor to make the picture of this great man live. It may, however, have another and more important significance. The report may, in a slightly distorted way,

recall the fact that Moses spoke another language and was not able to communicate with his Semitic neo-Egyptians [our ancestors—*L.S.*] without the help of an interpreter [this so-called brother Aaron—*L.S.*]—at least not at the beginning of their intercourse. Thus [and this sentence certainly is worthy of being reprinted in a good textbook of logic—*L.S.*] a fresh confirmation of the thesis: Moses was an Egyptian.¹⁴

I have to read to you another passage. As regards the derivation of the biblical religion from Aton, Freud says:

The most essential difference—apart from the name of its God—is that the Jewish religion entirely relinquishes the worship of the sun, to which the Egyptian one still adhered.¹⁵

This is an amazing understatement. The Bible is the document of the greatest effort ever made to deprive all heavenly bodies of all possibility of divine worship. But what then happens to the Egyptian origin of Moses' religion?

Considerations of the kind sketched here, which would make quite an impression on some people, do not make any impression on Freud, who knows better. He is disturbed by a difficulty of an entirely different kind. Certain modern scholars deny, explicitly or implicitly, that the founding of a new religion by Moses had anything to do with Egypt. These are other higher critics who have different preoccupations: they say the decisive event took place somewhere in the Sinai desert, for which there is some biblical evidence; they say furthermore that the new god was not the sun god Aton but an "uncanny, blood-thirsty demon who walks by night and shuns the light of day."¹⁶ This is the Old Testament God whom these people called Jahve. The Moses of the desert with whom we are so familiar and who is associated with this god, this volcano god, has nothing in common with the "august Egyptian Moses" "deduced" by Freud. We have, then, two Moses—the Egyptian Moses deduced by Freud, and this other Moses of the desert deduced by some other Old Testament scholars. Here Freud finds another higher critic who helps him greatly.

In 1922 Ernst Sellin made a discovery of decisive importance. He found in the book of the prophet Hosea (second half of the eight century) unmistakable traces of a tradition to the effect that the founder of their religion, Moses, met a violent end in a rebellion of his stubborn and refractory people. The religion he had instituted was at the same time abandoned. . . . Let us adopt from Sellin the surmise that the Egyptian Moses was killed by the Jews, and the religion he instituted abandoned. [pp. 42–43]

The Egyptian Moses was murdered and his religion was abandoned, but he had an Egyptian retinue with him, the original Levites. A fair number of them survived the massacre and the putting down of the Aton worship. The Levites became the elite of the Jewish people. The Jewish people emerged out of the confluence of the Jewish tribe which had come from Egypt under the leadership of Moses and the other tribes which had never been in Egypt. The latter had adopted in the desert the cult of the volcano god and their leader was a Midianite priest, let us say Jethro. The decisive event was a compromise. The Levites adopt the volcano god but insist on circumcision as a price, circumcision being an Egyptian institution. Everything else was abandoned except circumcision. What happens later on can be said in a few words. The story of the exodus from Egypt was rewritten from a volcanistic point of view, just as the sun god became overlaid by the volcano god. And Moses is overlaid by the Midianite priest, the original worshiper of the volcano god. We know nothing, however, about this other Moses. He is entirely obscured by the first, the Egyptian Moses. The only opening might be the clues provided by the contradictions to be found in the Bible's characterization of Moses. "He is often enough described as masterful, hot-tempered, even violent, and yet it is also said of him that he was the most patient and 'meek' of all men." (p. 49) That is a contradiction. I raise this question. We know the Egyptian Moses was masterful and hot-tempered, but why should the savage priest of the savage demon god be meeker than the refined Egyptian? One does not need a profound study of psychoanalysis for realizing that there are people who are both hot-tempered and meek. I have seen such people.

Then comes the big event. The big event is not the introduction of monotheism; the big event is the murder of Moses, of course.

Among all the events of Jewish prehistory that poets, priests, and historians of a later age undertook to portray, there was an outstanding one the suppression of which was called for by the most obvious and best of human motives. . . . Moses, trained in Ikhnaton's school, employed the same methods as the king; he gave commands and forced his religion on the people. . . . But while the tame Egyptians waited until fate had removed the sacred person of their Pharaoh, the savage Semites took their destiny into their own hands and did away with their tyrant. [pp. 57-58]

Later on the people regretted the murder of Moses and tried to forget it. This was due to the increased influence of the Levites. The spiritual and humane conception of the Egyptian Moses asserted itself gradually against this savage conception which the Midianite Moses had of that volcano god.

Jahve maintains that he had been the god of those patriarchs [Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—*L.S.*]; it is true—and he has to admit this himself—they did not worship him under this name.¹⁷

He does not add under what other name he used to be worshiped. [If you look up the passage you see that he appeared under the name God Almighty.—*L.S.*] . . . There was yet another purpose in bringing the patriarchs into the new Jahve religion. They had lived in Canaan; their memory was connected with certain localities in the country. Possibly they themselves had been Canaanite heroes or local divinities whom the immigrating Israelites had adopted for their early history. By evoking them one gave proof, so to speak, of having been born and bred in the country, and denied the odium that clings to the alien conqueror. It was a clever turn: the god Jahve gave them only what their ancestors had once possessed.¹⁸

I note here a strange lack of sympathy. From an extremely skeptical point of view one can say that we do not know anything about what happened and, as Freud remarked on another occasion, science (meaning higher criticism) has now become more lenient to tradition; why, then, not regard it as possible that Abraham lived and was a very honest and pious man (as he is described in the Bible)? Why not—if one is not full of hate or ingratitude toward one's origins.

The most interesting remark in this section is this:

None can doubt that it was only the idea of this other god that enabled the people of Israel to surmount all their hardships and to survive until our time. . . . It is honor enough for the Jewish people that it has kept alive such a tradition and produced men who lent it their voice, even if the stimulus had first come from outside, from a great stranger.¹⁹

In short, the pride of the Jewish people should not be affected by the proof that the founder of the Jewish religion had been an alien.

Considering the flimsiness of the proofs, one is entitled to say that the rationale of the argument cannot consist of the proofs but only of the conclusion. Freud published the conclusion in 1937. Did he wish to make sure that the catastrophe of 1933 did not lead him back to the social neurosis called Judaism? Did he wish to give the Christian Germans a lesson by showing them how a Jew behaves if confronted with the foreign origin of the founder of his religion? One thing is certain: on the basis of Freud's suggestion, the situation of the Jews in regard to Moses is identical with the situation of the Gentile (and hence in particular the German) in regard to Jesus. At the moment of the com-

plete collapse of the assimilation of Jews to Germans, Freud commits a supreme act of assimilation: he assimilates the situation of the Jews in regard to Moses to the situation of the Germans in regard to Jesus.

The third part of Freud's book is by far the largest. It is devoted to psychological discussions. These psychological discussions presuppose the truth of his historical findings, according to which Moses was an Egyptian and there were two Moses. We can safely say that the psychological discussion is an attempt to explain something which is a figment of Freud's imagination. That psychological explanation has the scientific status of an explanation not of the belief in witchcraft but of witchcraft. What precisely is the problem? One could argue that the question of Moses' origin and even of his religion is ultimately of no importance since we have solid information about the lives and the teachings of the great literary prophets. Here we have a unique development of high spirituality regardless of what were its humble and obscure origins. What we can do and must do is to try to understand that accessible teaching or message. If at all possible one must try to find out whether it is true. Freud's approach is different; what we need is a causal explanation: why did monotheism emerge among the Jews?; why did the Jews come to believe that they are the chosen people? Strictly speaking, the question does not concern the emergence of monotheism among Jews, for monotheism, we have learned, emerged in Egypt, and the Egyptian Moses merely transplanted it among the Jews. The question, therefore, is why did it take such a long time until the Jews became entirely and radically monotheistic?

I thus believe that the idea of an *only* God, as well as the emphasis laid on ethical demands in the name of that God and the rejection of all magic ceremonial, was indeed Mosaic doctrine, which at first found no hearing but came into its own after a long space of time and finally prevailed. How is such a delayed effect to be explained and where do we meet with similar phenomena? [p. 82]

On the basis of Freud's assumptions I would make this suggestion. The Jews in Egypt accepted Moses' leadership not because they were convinced of the truth of his extremely spiritualistic religion (they were simple, underdeveloped immigrants, as we have heard), but because he had promised them freedom. Simpleminded people can easily understand that. They were wholly unprepared for Moses' lofty message, especially so after their union in the desert with their completely savage brethren, those who worshiped the volcano god. There was no possibility of their understanding anything of Moses' message; but on the

other hand, they had a sound, practical motive to follow an Egyptian of high rank who offered them leadership with a view to their liberation. Who would not do that if he lives in subjection and slavery, when some member of the ruling empire comes and tells him, "I will liberate you." They would have been insane if they had not followed Moses under these conditions. After the conquest of Canaan they fell naturally victim to the endemic fertility cults and so on. The Levites preserved an inkling of the Mosaic religion, of course in a very corrupted fashion or version. Even this crude version could not have survived if the Egyptian origin of Moses and of his religion, as well as the original character of this religion, had not been successfully suppressed. Otherwise they would always have said, naturally, "We don't want to hear of this foreigner." Still, in some way the tradition of what truly happened at the beginning lingered on. Only with the coming of the supreme crisis did the Jews become receptive to the Mosaic message restored by the prophets. They could no longer trust in any political support—arms or alliances. To this suggestion Freud in effect replies that this explanation does not take proper cognizance of the fact that the repressed memory of the original monotheism became stronger in the course of time, not weaker. Again I would say, the reason that the resistance to the lofty monotheism grew weaker was due to the increasing education of the Jews through the experience they underwent. The lofty monotheism was the only doctrine which was not refuted by events in the way in which the belief in a purely national god, for example, is refuted by the destruction of the people whom he is supposed to protect. We explain the fate of monotheism among the early Jews by the loftiness of monotheism, by an assumption which Freud makes all the time, for he speaks all the time about the high spirituality of this belief.

But apparently I have misunderstood Freud completely. I shall try to "verbalize" his reply to my argument as follows: Spirituality, my foot! "Religious phenomena must of course be regarded as a part of mass psychology." (p. 91) You see that I did not exaggerate by using a crude, vulgar expression, for what can high spirituality mean if it is a part of mass psychology? Let us bow to this announcement of Freud from on high, although what we have heard from Freud about Ikhnaton's revolutionary heresy did not suggest a phenomenon of mass psychology. Let us, then, forget about spirituality and turn to mass psychology, because otherwise we will never make headway with Freud.

The understanding of religion in the context of mass psychology forces us to understand the subject under consideration in the light supplied by our knowledge of neuroses. The fact that Mosaic monotheism disappeared for such a long time must be understood as "latency"

of that monotheism. Latency is an essential part of neuroses. Neuroses are delayed effects of a compulsory character which are due to trauma; for example, to certain kinds of early childhood experiences related to sex. There is this formula from Freud: early trauma—defense—latency—outbreak of the neurosis—partial return of the repressed material. The application of this observation to religion is justified by two considerations. First, there is a fundamental correspondence between the experience of the individual, say, the neurotic individual observed by Freud, and the experience of the human race (which Freud could not have observed). Second, religions are neuroses, and this is proven easily by the compulsive character of religious convictions. Religion involves a belief “against which all logical objections remain powerless” (p. 107), and such belief is an obsession.

What, then, is the traumatic experience of the human race which gave rise to the monotheistic neurosis? The primeval horde, ruled with an iron hand by a father who monopolizes all available women—that is the first step. The sons, banding together, kill the father and eat him—that is the second step. The killing is caused by hatred, and the eating is caused by reverence or love. The sons wish to be like the father, to *be* the father, therefore they eat the father. After some time they abandon the desire to be the father and recognize one another as brothers. A kind of social compact is made, with which law and morality begin. An essential part of the compact is that there is to be no community of women, although there are to be limitations of some kind (prohibitions against incest and so on). But the thought of the father lingers on: a father substitute is worshiped. This is the beginning of religion; this is religion. Freud assumes a complicated development from the first and original father substitute to the various forms of polytheism; in these forms, the original form of the father substitute is hardly recognizable. But then there is a sudden reappearance of the single god who is omnipotent, i.e., of the murdered father who was then deified, and therewith of the guilt connected with the awful deed. From here we understand the fact that the Greeks did not have such a deep sense of guilt as Jews or Christians: they were polytheists and thus *the* father was not in the foreground of their thought, nor was their guilt feeling linked to the murder of the father.

We understand from here why monotheism took hold of the Jews, although it did not emerge among them in Egypt; in Egypt, monotheism remained the concern of an inconsequential sect. The psychological motive did not exist in the Egyptians because they had not murdered a fatherlike being. But the Jews had murdered Moses, an eminent father substitute; they had not merely remembered the original crime but had

reenacted it; thus, there existed a particularly strong feeling of guilt, fixation, and so on. They became *the* God-killers who had to repress this deed. Freud's theory is worthy of consideration under the following conditions: (a) *if* religion is a kind of neurosis; (b) *if* the original status of man was the horde as described; (c) *if* the original horde was transformed into the fraternal tribe in the manner described; (d) *if* the rationale of religious symbols is remembered as long as the symbols persist, or, if there is such a thing as racial memory proper; (e) *if* there are no reasons inherent in polytheism which make intelligible the transition from polytheism into monotheism; and (f) *if* the Jews murdered Moses.

Freud discusses some difficulties. First, he notes the fact that he knows of only one example of this neurotic development, and scientific theories cannot well be based on a single example. In this context he makes the following observation:

. . . it is a good rule in analytic work to be satisfied with explaining what exists and not to try to explain what has not happened. [pp. 118–19]

Secondly, in the case of neuroses of individuals there exist memory traces of the past in the unconscious. What is the equivalent of this in the case of neuroses of peoples? Traditions, "active traditions." But are there any "active traditions" of the primeval murder of the father by the brothers? Let us read a few more passages.

A new complication arises, however, when we become aware that there probably exists in the mental life of the individual not only what he has experienced himself, but also what he brought with him at birth, fragments of phylogenetic origin, an archaic heritage. . . . The first and most certain answer is that it consists in certain dispositions, such as all living beings possess. . . . Analytic research, however, has also brought to light other things, which exceed in significance anything we have so far discussed. In studying reactions to early traumata we often find to our surprise that they do not keep strictly to what the individual himself has experienced, but deviate from this in a way that would accord much better with their being reactions to genetic events and in general can be explained only through such an influence. The behavior of a neurotic child to his parents when under the influence of an Oedipus and castration complex is very rich in such reactions, which seem unreasonable in the individual and can only be understood phylogenetically, in relation to the experiences of earlier generations. . . . On second thought I must admit that I have argued as if there were no question that there exists an inheritance of memory—traces of what our forefathers experienced, quite indepen-

dently of direct communication and of the influence of education by example. When I speak of an old tradition still alive in a people, of the formation of a national character, it is such an inherited tradition, and not one carried on by word of mouth, that I have in mind. Or at least I did not distinguish between the two, and was not quite clear about what a bold step I took by neglecting this difference. This state of affairs is made more difficult, it is true, by the present attitude of biological science, which rejects the idea of acquired qualities being transmitted to descendants. I admit, in all modesty, that in spite of this I cannot picture biological development proceeding without taking this factor into account. [pp. 125–28]

Here is a great difficulty which is in no way disposed of but merely noted. To put it mildly and politely, we do not have knowledge of the possibility of a group memory different from that actualized by tradition.

I turn to a related issue.

If we are quite clear in our minds that a procedure like the present one—to take from the traditional material what seems useful and to reject what is unsuitable, and then to put the individual pieces together according to their psychological probability—does not afford any security for finding the truth, then one is quite right to ask why such an attempt was undertaken. In answer to this I must cite the result. If we substantially reduce the severe demands usually made on a historical and psychological investigation, then it might be possible to clear up problems that have always seemed worthy of attention and that, in consequence of recent events, force themselves again on our observation. [p. 133]

That is to say, quite a few problems may be easily solved if we are not squeamish regarding proof and truth. Freud admits here that what he offers is at best a plausible hypothesis. In fact, it is a wild guess. As far as religion is concerned, Freud's work is based, as Freud always admitted, on the work of Robertson Smith.

I still adhere to this sequence of thought [the Smithian theory—L.S.]. I have often been vehemently reproached for not changing my opinions in later editions of my book [*Totem and Taboo*], since more recent ethnologists have without exception discarded Robertson Smith's theories and have in part replaced them by others which differ extensively. I would reply that these alleged advances in science are well known to me. Yet I have not been convinced either of their correctness or of Robertson Smith's errors. Contradiction is not always refutation; a new theory does not necessarily denote progress. Above all, however, I am not an ethnologist, but a psychoanalyst. [p. 169]

But he uses all the time ethnological theories, although ethnology is a field wholly outside his competence, as he readily admits, and he chooses to reject ethnological theories without even attempting to discuss them. The problem which Freud tries to solve is the amazing power of survival of the Jewish people in spite of, or because of, its being an intensely disliked people. Freud traces this phenomenon in the first place to the Jews' belief in their election, which is very sound; but he immediately interprets the belief in election as extraordinary pride or self-confidence. He traces that extreme self-confidence to the Jews' extraordinary spirituality, and he wonders why such spirituality should raise the self-confidence of the people. This is a question for him, because he believes that spirituality does not belong to man's fundamental constitution. It is a derivation from primary urges.

I cannot go into this comprehensive question, but must limit myself to the question regarding religious spirituality. Religious spirituality implies sacred prohibitions which have a very strong affective note (I try to use his terminology), but not a rational motivation. Freud's example here is the prohibition against incest with daughter or sister. Freud does not consider the fact that without a law of exogamy the enlargement of the family to a political society is not possible, and the order of exogamy must be understood from the end which it brings about. However this may be, the psychological problem of religion arises only if it is certain that God does not exist. The denial of God's existence is only the negative condition of Freud's analysis, a condition which he shares with many men throughout the ages. But his predecessors explained the genesis of religion differently, for example, politically, or by the notion that fear together with ignorance caused religion. Taking for a moment the psychological problem as a necessary and legitimate problem, what strikes us first in religion is the phenomenon of reverence. Reverence is familiar to us first, and from childhood on, as reverence for our parents, our origins. We imply that our origins are greater than we ourselves, and this implies a sense of our defects. Is such a sense of our defects pathological?

How comprehensive, exhaustive, and final are the doctrines of the believers compared with the labored, poor, and patchy attempts at explanation which are the best we can produce! [p. 157]

It would seem that all serious men are aware of their defects, and have a realization, a nonpathological realization, of their defects. And that always implies some reverence for people or beings possibly greater than us. Every serious man is aware of the defects of his understanding,

and of the fact that these defects are partly due to insufficient effort, to guilt. Most men know men who are superior to them, men to whom they look up—reasonably. Surely they do not necessarily believe everything these other men say. They are critical. But there are also cases in which intelligent and otherwise critical men look up without the possibility of criticism, and this seems to be the crucial case. The crucial case is the founder-legislator. We cannot know what went on in the minds of the most intelligent men of early times, but we know a bit about the phenomenon called ancient law, understood as unchangeable. The unchangeable character was traced to its perfection—and to the perfection of the legislator. That is to say, it was traced to something which is no longer admitted. We are then confronted with the phenomenon of uncritical reverence. This phenomenon is well known in Judaism as well as in other legal systems where changes to the law can take place only through legal fictions and so on. What is underlying this seemingly irrational conservatism of ancient societies? Change of laws means change of human beings, and this takes away the sanctity of all laws. Sanctity of the laws cannot be understood except in terms of the divine origin of the laws. Behind this is the notion that law, order, is preceded by a chaos, not only by extreme discord but by a total lack of security in any sense. The order gave meaning; outside the order there is meaninglessness and chaos. Therefore, cling to the law. Freud calls this clinging an obsession. He implies that there is no rational ground for such clinging. But conduct which is not rational for some men may be very rational for others. For a citizen of a modern republic it would be irrational to cling to a law made by Congress last year as something unchangeable, although the clinging to the Constitution would already have a somewhat different status.

Freud's standard of rationality is taken from modern man. He tacitly measures the conduct of early man by a standard of rationality applicable to modern man. We do not call a man obsessed if being shipwrecked he clings with all his might to a plank, or if he frantically runs away from a tiger. Now let us assume that what he was running away from was not a tiger but something which he mistook for a tiger. Mistakes of this kind are not necessarily pathological. Even if the mistake was prompted by a habitual fear of tigers one might easily say that in one's intercourse with tigers even exaggerated caution is indicated. Now let us assume that early man was more ignorant than modern man, and that he had less facility for distinguishing between truly dangerous things and things which only looked dangerous. He would be reasonably afraid of many things of which we reasonably are not afraid. He could not help thinking about the whole. Will the sun always

rise? Will the unheard of flood of last year not be followed by one infinitely worse in the coming year? He assumed that what he was depending on was more powerful and greater than he, and that whatever was greater than he must be greater than he in every respect. He was, therefore, inclined to believe that he depended on superhuman powers who think and will, who thus can know his thoughts and actions. Given these premises, was he not reasonably afraid? And if a superior man arose and said, "If you act in this and this way, but only if you act in this and this way, you will not have to be afraid," would he not reasonably cling to that way without having an obsession; as little as a man can be said to have an obsession when he is running away from a tiger. Even people of an entirely different stamp have known this feeling of everything turning around. How often does Plato speak of that into which we come when we cease to take for granted the obvious, when we become aware of the enigmatic character of the obvious? Freud contends that all the assertions made by early legislators have been empirically refuted. Were they? Let us take the most simple example. The man who fears the tiger fears being killed by the tiger. He fears death. Now a part of the founder's promise may have been that if you conduct yourself in the way pointed out by him, and only if you do that, you will have a perfectly blessed life after your death. Is there an empirical refutation of this assertion? Freud does not speak, however, of empirical objections but of logical objections. Religious convictions are mass neuroses since all logical arguments remain powerless against the absurdity of these convictions. Freud presupposes, I think rightly, the validity of the principle of contradiction. But what is the locus of that principle? I find only this answer:

... a standard is created in the Ego which opposes the other faculties by observation, criticism, and prohibition. We call this new standard the *Superego*. [p. 149]

Now the standard of criticism is in all probability characterized by self-contradiction, because "the superego is the successor and representative of the parents . . . who superintended the actions of the individual in his first years of life; it perpetuates their functions almost without a change."²⁰ Since we cannot assume that all parents are free from self-contradiction, the superego seems to contain contradictions within itself. But above all, what are these logical objections? What are these massive self-contradictions inherent in the religious assertions? I will simplify the discussion by speaking only of liberal religion. It would be absurd to deny that there are men who are religious without being orthodox.

Liberal religion makes a distinction between the core of the religious tradition and its periphery. Freud tacitly refuses to make a distinction between the periphery and the core without justifying this refusal. He does not consider the possibility that the religious doctrines may be inadequate expressions of a fundamental experience, and that there is a great variety of levels of that experience. By proving that certain expressions of the fundamental experience and perhaps even some forms of that experience itself are self-contradictory, one does not disprove all of the experience itself, one does not disprove at all that the experience itself, at its highest level, is not self-contradictory. The reason for Freud's failure is simple: he does not know anything of the experience in question. He has never experienced what some people call the Presence or the Call, because he has built up a wall, a very weak wall to boot, against this experience.

Let us try to see how that basic experience comes to sight in Freud's work in a prereligious or even a religious manner. The psychological problem of the genesis of religion arises only if we are certain that no God exists. If a God exists, the psychological explanation of the experience of God is unimportant. If one is merely an agnostic and not an atheist, one cannot exclude the possibility that the ground of religion is the Presence or the Call of God. The certainty that no God exists would presuppose that there is no possible place for God in the whole; in other words, there is no mystery. For Freud, mysteries are no more than unsolved problems. All problems are in principle solvable. For if there were true mysteries, religion may be a way, perhaps *the* way, of experiencing and expressing these mysteries. I have to correct myself. Freud does recognize mysteries.

We know that genius is incomprehensible and unaccountable and it should therefore not be called upon as an explanation until every other solution has failed. [p. 81]

The problem how the Jews could survive until today is not one that has proved easy to solve. "One cannot, however, reasonably demand or expect exhaustive answers of such enigmas."²¹ That is to say, the mystery fundamentally remains. But Freud does not draw any conclusions from this. He seems to live in the perspective of infinite progress of science, without realizing that the infinite progress of science implies the perpetuity of unsolved problems, for otherwise the progress would not have to be infinite. But the problems which remain always unsolved are hard to distinguish from mysteries. The scientific explanation of the genesis of religion, and therefore of religion itself, cannot

be truer than science in general. If the basic premises of science are hypothetical, any scientific explanation of religion, even one which is free from the grave defects of Dr. Freud's, is bound to be hypothetical. Freud takes for granted the validity of the principle of causality. But what is the status of that principle? What can be its status on the basis of Freud's doctrine of man? If the scientific explanation of religion is necessarily hypothetical, the alternative, namely, a religious interpretation of religion, cannot possibly be absurd. We must go a step further. If the basic premises of science are not of such a character that they can be denied as absurd, science as such is radically hypothetical. In addition, science is unable to prove that science is good, for value judgments are impossible for science. Science itself rests, then, ultimately on a nonrational choice. We shall not draw the conclusion that therefore the man wholly dedicated to science, to say nothing of those wholly dedicated to their more or less flimsy theories, are driven by a neurotic compulsion. On the contrary we would say that if their premises are correct, man has no choice but to choose nonrationally between science and nonscience, e.g., between science and religion, unless he wants to be a thoughtless drifter or a moneymaker. This being compelled to choose would be *the* fundamental phenomenon behind which we cannot go and which cannot possibly be explained by science, because any scientific explanation presupposes already the groundless choice of science.

Freud's book completely lacks a philosophic basis. By a philosophic basis I mean also a reflection on philosophy itself, or an understanding of man in the light of philosophy as an outstanding human possibility which is not derivative but which belongs to man as man. I conclude with a remark on a casual remark by Freud. In speaking about the origins of Christianity, Freud says:

Here we also find the real source of the "tragic guilt" of the hero in drama—a guilt hard to demonstrate otherwise. We can hardly doubt that in Greek tragedy the hero and the chorus represent this same rebel hero and the brother horde . . . [p. 111]

The implication is this—there cannot be tragic conflict. For example, such a conflict as between loyalty to the city and loyalty to one's convictions cannot be a tragic conflict. All men can become well-functioning cogs in a big machine. This view has been supremely presented, unforgettably presented, by a man from whom Freud is said to have learned certain things—Nietzsche. I read to you from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* about the last man.

"What is love? What is creation? What is longing? What is a star?" thus asks the last man, and he blinks.

The earth has become small, and on it hops the last man, who makes everything small. His race is as ineradicable as the flea-beetle; the last man lives longest.

"We have invented happiness," say the last men, and they blink. They have left the regions where it was hard to live, for one needs warmth. One still loves one's neighbor and rubs against him, for one needs warmth.

Becoming sick and harboring suspicion are sinful to them: one proceeds carefully. A fool, whoever still stumbles over stones or human beings! A little poison now and then: that makes for agreeable dreams. And much poison in the end, for an agreeable death.

One still works, for work is a form of entertainment. But one is careful lest the entertainment be too harrowing. One no longer becomes poor or rich: both require too much exertion. Who still wants to rule? Who obey? Both require too much exertion.

No shepherd and one herd! Everybody wants the same, everybody is the same: whoever feels different goes voluntarily into a madhouse.

"Formerly, all the world was mad," say the most refined, and they blink.

One is clever and knows everything that has ever happened: so there is no end of derision. One still quarrels, but one is soon reconciled—else it might spoil the digestion.

One has one's little pleasure for the day and one's little pleasure for the night: but one has a regard for health.

"We have invented happiness," say the last men, and they blink.²²

Notes

["Freud on Moses and Monotheism" was a lecture delivered by Leo Strauss at the Hillel House, University of Chicago. It seems to have been delivered in the spring quarter (March–June) of 1958, although the precise date is not known to the editor. Strauss was apparently using notes which had been prepared previously, but these do not survive. A transcription was made by an unknown transcriber from a tape recording of the lecture. This published version is based on that transcription. It must be added that it appears Strauss did not either review or formally approve the above lecture in its transcribed version. The notes below to this lecture are entirely the work of the present editor. —Ed.]

1. This allusion to a plea for "a philosophy which is wholly alien to me, but by which I could not help being impressed," may refer to a "Conversation with Martin Buber," which was introduced by Strauss, and which occurred at the Hillel House of the University of Chicago on 3 December 1951. ◀

2. The English translation, to which Strauss refers by page numbers in the lecture, seems to have been: Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, translated by Katherine Jones (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1949). The original German version is: *Der Mann Moses und die monotheistische Religion: Drei Abhandlungen* (Amsterdam: Allert de Lange, 1939). It also appears in the *Gesammelte Werke* (1950), vol. 16, 101–246. Also useful is the “authorized” English translation by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1974). ◀

3. See Leo Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1958). This book is an augmented version of the Walgreen Lectures that were delivered at the University of Chicago in 1953. For some of Strauss’s reflections on Machiavelli and the Bible in general, see *Thoughts on Machiavelli*, 174–232; for Machiavelli and Moses specifically, see 70–84, 204–5; for whether Machiavelli “heard the Call” or “sensed the Presence,” see 203. ◀

4. A tape or a transcript of the discussion period that followed this lecture does not survive. The subject on which Strauss had “quasi-promised” to lecture, but which he could not deal with, is somewhat unclear. It seems to have been: Machiavelli’s view of Moses as compared with Freud’s. He suggests that he regards their views as essentially similar in the most important respects (a coin “where both sides look exactly alike”). Yet this leads him to imply equally important differences, determined by the different objects of their critiques: to refute anti-Semitic arguments (Freud) versus to deconstruct Western religion (Machiavelli). In line with the preceding clarification, I believe that the contradictions between the spoken verb tenses in the transcription of this paragraph of Strauss’s lecture can only be resolved by emending the text. Thus, certain additions and corrections have been made by the editor so that the meaning of what Strauss says in this paragraph can be rendered fully consistent with itself. But to enable the reader to judge for himself, I reproduce the three unemended passages as they appear in the text of the transcription:

. . . Of course, I have not heard that lecture, . . . but I will present the other side of the coin making the assumption, . . . What I heard that evening over the dinner table. . . . ◀

5. Ernst Simon, “Sigmund Freud, the Jew.” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 2 (1957): 270–305. ◀

6. *Ibid.*, 287–89. Strauss quotes the page citations for the passages which are taken from Freud’s *Moses and Monotheism* in the sentences from Simon’s article which Strauss also quotes, and he does so as they are given in the footnotes of Simon’s article. Simon also uses the translation by Katherine Jones. (See note 2, *supra*.) The passage Simon quotes from the third essay on King Ikhnaton and the origin of “the idea of monotheism” appears in *Moses and Monotheism*, 141. Freud’s original discussion of the Egyptian origins of Mosaic monotheism in the second essay, to which Simon refers, starts on 16, and continues through 38. As a further note to these issues, Yosef H. Yerushalmi in his

Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991) observes that Thomas Mann in his novel *Joseph and His Brothers* takes a bold step beyond Freud and gives to Joseph the responsibility for this teaching of monotheism to Ikhnaton. For the chapter to which Yerushalmi refers, see *Joseph and His Brothers*, translated by H. T. Lowe-Porter (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948) [in Part 4, *Joseph the Provider*], "All Too Blissful," 962–70. (See *Freud's Moses*, 89.) ◀

7. See Yehuda Halevi, *Kuzari* 1.1–4 and 10–14; Leo Strauss, "The Law of Reason in the *Kuzari*," in *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1952), 95–141; Kenneth Hart Green, "Religion, Philosophy, and Morality: How Leo Strauss Read Judah Halevi's *Kuzari*," in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 61, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 225–73. ◀

8. Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, translated by Katherine Jones, 3. ◀

9. *Ibid.*, 7. ◀

10. *Ibid.*, 12. ◀

11. Jeremiah 9:22–23 seems to be the core of the biblical text to which Strauss refers:

Thus saith the Lord:
 Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom,
 Neither let the mighty man glory in his might,
 Let not the rich man glory in his riches;
 But let him that glorieth glory in this,
 That he understandeth, and knoweth Me,
 That I am the Lord who exercise mercy,
 Justice, and righteousness, in the earth;
 For in these things I delight,
 Saith the Lord.

These verses seem to have been combined with, or completed by, such verses as: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1:7); "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 9:10 and Psalm 111:10); and "The reward of humility is the fear of the Lord" (Proverbs 22:4). (I quote the translations of these passages from *The Holy Scriptures* [Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1955].) For Moses' humility, see Numbers 12:3. For the reference in the next sentences to the "alien" or "foreigner" who taught "the great legislator . . . the great science of administration," he alludes to Moses' Midianite father-in-law Jethro and the events narrated in Exodus 18:13–27. But see also Numbers 11:10–30, and Deuteronomy 1:9–18. And for Maimonides on the passage in Jeremiah to which Strauss refers, see *The Guide of the Perplexed* 3.54, with comments on glory, wisdom, and human perfection. ◀

12. Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, translated by Katherine Jones, 16. ◀

13. Ibid., 18. ◀

14. Ibid., 37–38. ◀

15. Ibid., 28. ◀

16. Ibid., 39. ◀

17. Ibid., 53–54. ◀

18. Ibid., 54–56. For the name God Almighty (*El Shaddai*), see Exodus 6:3. ◀

19. Ibid., 62–63. ◀

20. Ibid., 149. Strauss's quotation omits the words "(and educators)," which in Freud's original follow the phrase "successor and representative of the parents." ◀

21. Ibid., 176. For Strauss on the "mystery" of being, see "Why We Remain Jews," *infra*, 328–29. For the importance of the search for *the* truth, see "Progress or Return?," *supra*, 116–17; "Preface to Isaac Husik, *Philosophical Essays*," *supra*, 254–56; "Why We Remain Jews," *infra*, 343–45; "Jerusalem and Athens," *infra*, 378–79; "Perspectives on the Good Society," *infra*, 444. For a critique of modern "dogmatic atheism," see "An Epilogue," in *An Introduction to Political Philosophy* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 148–49. Strauss would no doubt have been in a qualified sympathy with Oskar Pfister's simple theological response to Freud's playful but proud characterization of himself as a "godless Jew." As Pfister put it: "he who lives for truth lives in God." See *Psychoanalysis and Faith: The Letters of Sigmund Freud and Oskar Pfister*, edited by Heinrich Meng and Ernst L. Freud, and translated by Eric Mosbacher (London: The Hogarth Press, 1963), 64. For an opposite purpose, Nietzsche rejected the supposed atheism of the modern scientist as well as of the modern "free spirit," precisely because they both still "believe" in *the* truth. See *On the Genealogy of Morals*, translated by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1969), Third Essay, Sections 24–25, pp. 148–56. ◀

22. "Zarathustra's Prologue," *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, translated by Walter Kaufmann, in *The Portable Nietzsche* (New York: Viking Press, 1954), 129–30. ◀